

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ISLAMA 06603 290248Z

ACTION OES-07

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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD

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INFO AMEMBASSY KABUL

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AMEMBASSY PARIS

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AMEMBASSY VIENNA

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TAGS: PFOR, PINT, MNUC, PK, FR

SUBJECT: NUCLEAR REPROCESSING PLANT CONTINUES AS A PUBLIC ISSUE

REF: NEW DELHI 8837 (NOTAL)

1. THE REPROCESSING PLANT ISSUE HAS ONCE AGAIN BEEN GIVEN PROMINENT COVERAGE IN THE PAK PRESS. THE LATEST SPATE OF ARTICLES AND EDITORIALS, INCLUDING A LONG AND DETAILED MFA STATEMENT, WAS GENERATED BY AN EXTENSIVE REPLAY IN JUNE 24 PRESS OF A SAMACHAR NEWS DISPATCH FROM PARIS (REFTTEL). THE SAMACHAR ARTICLE COMMENTED ON DESAI'S TALKS WITH GISCARD AND BARRE IN WHICH THE INDIAN PM REPORTEDLY RAISED THE QUESTION OF PAKISTAN'S PURCHASE OF A REPROCESSING PLANT AND PAK-INDIAN RELATIONS.

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PAGE 02 ISLAMA 06603 290248Z

2. ACCORDING TO THE PAK PRESS, THE SAMACHAR ARTICLE STATES THAT THE GOF WAS COMMITTED TO BUILD THE PLANT AND ONLY A NEW GOVERNMENT IN PAKISTAN COULD BREAK THE AGREEMENT. THE REPORT ADDS DESAI IS UNDERSTOOD TO HAVE ACHIEVED CONSIDERABLE SUCCESS IN CONVINCING THE FRENCH OF THE DANGERS OF A NEW NUCLEAR ARMS RACE IN THE SUB-CONTINENT IF PAKISTAN

ACQUIRED THE NEW PLANT. DESAI IS STATED TO HAVE EXPRESSED INDIA'S FEAR THAT THE PLUTONIUM PRODUCED IN THE PAK PLANT COULD BE DIVERTED AND USED TO MAKE NUCLEAR WEAPONS. HE IS ALSO CREDITED AS SAYING THAT THE DANGER WOULD BE ALL THE MORE WITH A POLITICALLY UNSTABLE PAKISTAN WHERE AN IRRESPONSIBLE REGIME MAY TAKE POWER.

3. THE GOP REACTION WAS SUDDEN AND SHARP. VIRTUALLY ALL PAK PAPERS ON SUNDAY, JUNE 26, FRONT PAGED A STORY QUOTING MFA SPOKESMAN'S ATTACK ON SAMACHAR ARTICLE AS " INDIAN MEDDLING WITH PAK-FRENCH DEAL." THE SPOKESMAN SAID THE GOP STRONGLY DEPLORED THE FLOOD OF PROPAGANDA LET LOOSE BY SAMACHAR AND CERTAIN SECTIONS OF U.S. NEWS MEDIA IN A BID TO PRESSURE FRANCE TO BACK ON ITS AGREEMENT. HE ADDED THAT IF THE REPORTS IN THE SAMACHAR ARTICLE OF JUNE 19 WERE CORRECT THEN IT WAS A MATTER OF REGRET THAT DESAI SHOULD HAVE ATTEMPTED TO PERSUADE THE FRENCH LEADERS TO BREAK THE AGREEMENT WITH PAKISTAN. AFTER NOTING WITH SATISFACTION THAT THE FRENCH GAVE NO ASSURANCE TO INDIA REGARDING THE PLANT, THE SPOKESMAN SAID THAT IT WAS IRONIC THAT THE PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA, THE ONLY COUNTRY WHICH WAS GUILTY OF MAKING A BOMB BY CLANDESTINE DIVERSION OF PLUTONIUM FROM ITS PEACEFUL NUCLEAR PROGRAM, SHOULD NOW ACCUSE PAKISTAN OF A DESIRE TO FOLLOW INDIA'S EXAMPLE.

4. THE SPOKESMAN ADDED THAT ON THE REPROCESSING PLANT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 ISLAMA 06603 290248Z

ISSUE THE INDIAN PM HAD REPEATED THE INSPIRED ARGUMENT OF WESTERN INFORMATION MEDIA THAT THE DEAL SHOULD BE CALLED OFF BECAUSE THE POSSIBILITY OF DIVERSION OF NUCLEAR FUEL BY PAKISTAN WAS GREATER SINCE IT WAS UNSTABLE AND THERE WAS A DANGER OF AN IRRESPONSIBLE REGIME TAKING OVER. THE MFA OFFICIAL POINTED OUT THAT WHEREAS BEFORE INDIA DID NOT ACCEPT THE DISCRIMINATORY POLICIES OF THE NUCLEAR EXPORTING COUNTRIES, INDIA NOW HAD REVERSED ITSELF. THE SAMACHAR REPORT THE SPOKESMAN POINTED OUT, CONTAINED MANY TENDENTIOUS AND MISLEADING STATEMENTS ABOUT THE NUMBER OF BOMBS WHICH PAKISTAN WILL BE ABLE TO MAKE BY 1985 AS A RESULT OF THE ACQUISITION OF THE REPROCESSING PLANT. THE SPOKESMAN SAID IT WAS INDIA WHICH WAS IN A POSITION TO MANUFACTURE HUNDREDS OF NUCLEAR WEAPONS BECAUSE IT HAD REFUSED TO ACCEPT INTERNATIONAL SAFEGUARDS OVER ITS NUCLEAR PROGRAM.

5. SEVERAL PAPERS ALSO CARRIED EDITORIALS PREDICTABLY HIGHLY CRITICAL OF THE SAMACHAR DISPATCH AND SUPPORTIVE OF THE MFA'S STATEMENT. THE URDU LANGUAGE DAILIES "JANG" AND "NAWA-I-WAQT" DEPLORED DESAI'S "FUTILE EFFORTS" TO HAVE FRANCE CANCEL THE DEAL. THEY POINTED OUT THAT

PAKISTAN WANTS THE PLANT FOR PEACEFUL PURPOSES ONLY AND URGED THE JANATA GOVERNMENT NOT TO GET INVOLVED IN THE PAK-FRENCH DEAL. AN EDITORIAL IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE "NEW TIMES" COMMENTED THAT THE INDIAN PM'S COMMENTS ON PAKISTAN'S ACQUISITION OF A PLANT WERE "UNTENABLE". THE EDITORIAL NOTES THAT PM BHUTTO HAS REPEATEDLY ASSURED THE WORLD THAT PAKISTAN HAS NEITHER THE INTENTION NOR THE RESOURCES TO EMBARK ON A "RECKLESS VENTURE" OF MANUFACTURING BOMBS.

6. THE LATEST MFA STATEMENT AND THE STRONGLY WORDED ARTICLES AND EDITORIALS HTAT HAVE APPEARED IN THE PRESS ARE REMINDERS THAT THE GOVERNMENT INTEDNS TO KEEP THE REPROCESSING PLANT ISSUE ON THE FRONT BURNER IN PAKISTAN. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 04 ISLAMA 06603 290248Z

THE DETAILED REBUTTAL BY THE MFA TO DESAI'S REPORTED COMMENTS IS AN INDICATION OF THE GOP'S SENSITIVITY ON THIS ISSUE AND MUST BE VIEWED IN THE CONTEXT OF BHUTTO'S CONFRONTATION WITH THE OPPOSITION PAKISTAN NATIONAL ALLIANCE AND IN PREPARATION FOR ELECTIONS. WITH RECENT ACCUSATIONS BY THE OPPOSITION THAT THE ONLY IMPEDIMENT TO THE PURCHASE OF THE PLANT IS U.S. AND FRENCH MISTRUST OF BHUTTO, THE PM CONTINUES TO EMPHASIZE THE GOP'S DETERMINATION AND HIS RESOLVE AND ABILITY, IN THE FACE OF OUTSIDE PRESSURES, TO PROCURE THE PLANT. HUMMEL

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